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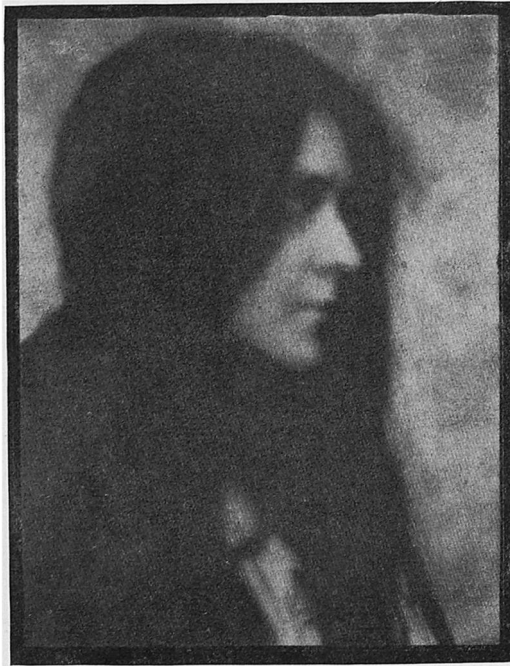
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WORK OF S. L. WILLARD IN PICTORIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The time has happily gone by when critics, schooled to regard sculpture and painting as par excellence the fine arts, feel called upon to deny to photography a place in the same category.



POVERTY

By S. L. Willard

From a Gum Bichromate Print

True it is that photography, in the name of the beautiful, has perpetrated a woeful number of abominations; but true it also is that during the last few years it has given, and at the present time is daily giving, to the public works that as truly merit the appellation "fine arts" as do the other artistic products of skill and genius that have elicited the world's plaudits.

For a time the discovery of Daguerre in making pictures by sunlight excited extravagant and false hopes, which were bound to react against the camera as a means of recording acceptable scenes and thus increasing the world's store of

the beautiful. Like all other agencies employed by mankind, photography has its limitations. The special quality that was extolled at the outset was that of securing an exact definition, and it secured this primarily by the fact that it was a strictly mechanical means of reproduction. From the beginning, therefore, emphasis was laid on

the very characteristics which artists are wont to eliminate, and the fell effect of this was very soon observable in artistic circles.

It requires only an inspection of some of the early products of photography to find in unpleasant evidence the witness of the machine. The early photographs are simply registers of facts, and they imply that the photographers were more concerned with the machine than with the artistic quality of its product. Photographs dating back to the 40's are stiff, formal, characterless, inartistic. They are pre-eminently machine-made. The devotees of the fine arts, so called, were not slow to discover this, and the high hopes excited by the camera were speedily dashed, partly by the subserviency of the operators to their newly invented machine, and partly by the discredit cast upon it from an artistic standpoint by those devoted to the older and more common forms of pictorial expression. Everything



DESPAIR

By S. L. Willard

From a Gum Bichromate Print

has to have its crude beginnings, and in the crude beginnings of photography, artists of the pen, the burin, the needle, and the brush could see no evidences of a rival in art expression. The development of the last few years, however, has materially turned the tables. Photography, through the devoted efforts of a few gifted workers, has forged ahead till it has in a large measure cast off the shackles of the machine. In portraiture it is safe to say the photographer rivals, if he does not excel, the old-time painter—and this is

said whether we consider his product from the standpoint of fidelity of likeness or from that of style, pose, or artistic accessories. In landscape, too, the workers with the camera have achieved signal success, and we have today bits of nature which in tone, color, composition, are as worthy of consideration as pictures pure and simple as anything that has been produced by the world's masters with brush and palette.

For the high development of present-day photography much credit is due to the gifted workers of Vienna who in 1899 organized the Viennese Photographic Salon as a protest against the Photographic Society of Great Britain, now known as the "Royal," and later to the so-called "Linked Ring," a body of men and women who set for themselves the task of upholding picture photography to its highest possible standard. We in America take great pride in pointing to our Innesses, Martins, Davises, Murphys, Sargents, and a long list of other exemplars of the pictorial art. Should we not take equal pride in pointing in photography to our Kasebiers, Days, Whites, Keileys, Eickemeyers, Dyers, Stieglitzs, and the other men and women who have labored long and faithfully to abolish the machine-like qualities of the early photographs and make the product of the camera not merely a register of facts but a recorder of thought and feeling?

Among these workers who have regarded the camera much as painters have regarded the palette and brush, and who have striven to remove or at least disguise its limitations, should be classed S. L. Willard, of Chicago, a name well known in photographic salons, but one less known to the art-loving public than the merit of his pictures warrants. Mr. Willard is not a professional photographer, but a man devoted to the onerous duties of business pursuits. His work with the camera is primarily a matter of love, a diversion and recreation. Not being dependent upon his art for a livelihood, he has worked leisurely and lovingly, and has produced many of as charming plates as are to be found in the whole range of pictorial photography.

He has a well-equipped private studio in his home, and he has worked for years as the whim or the spirit has moved him, with no thought of financial returns from his art, but simply and solely to see how far he could make his instruments subserve his artistic sense, to what extent he could overcome its limitations, and in what measure he could make it co-operate with him in the production of beautiful pictures. Working in this way it is only natural that he should be willing to work hours, days, and even weeks, in the development of a single plate, just as many a painter has been loath to take a canvas from his easel. Had there been the first element of commercialism in his work, it is to be doubted if his art would have attained its present high level. His prints bear the earmarks of leisurely effort intelligently directed.

A year or more ago Charles H. Caffin gave expression to certain facts confronting the photographer which I may be pardoned for here quoting. Said he:

"There are two distinct roads in photography—the utilitarian and the æsthetic; the goal of the one being a record of facts, and of the other an expression of beauty. They run parallel to each other, and many cross-paths connect them. Examples of utilitarian photo-



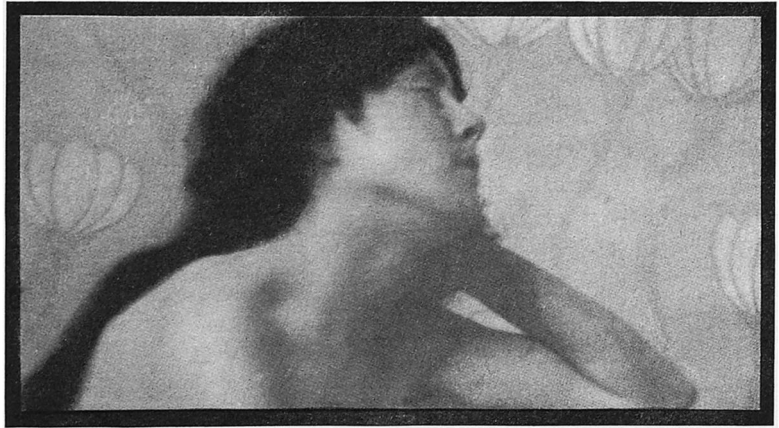
THE MEADOW STREAM

By S. L. Willard

From a Gum Bichromate Print

graphs are those of machinery, of buildings, and engineering works, of war scenes, and daily incidents used in illustrated papers, of a large majority of the views taken by tourists and of the great number of portraits. In all these the operator relies upon the excellence of his camera, and in developing and printing aims primarily at exact definition.

"Examples of the intermediate class are photographs of paintings, sculpture, and architecture, which, while first of all useful as records of works of art, are treated with so much skill and feeling for the beauty of the originals that they have an independent value as being



LOTUS EATER

By S. L. Willard

themselves things of beauty. Pre-eminent in this class is the portrait, which gives a truthful record of the individual's characteristics, at the same time being so handsome as a picture that we enjoy it apart from any consideration of its being a good likeness.

"Lastly, there is the photograph whose motive is purely æsthetic; to be beautiful. It will record facts, but not as facts; it will even ignore facts if they interfere with the conception that is kept in view; just as Corot in his paintings certainly recorded the phenomena of morning and twilight skies, and just as certainly left out a number of facts which must have confronted him as he sat before the scene, his object being not to get at facts, but to express the emotions with which the facts affected him.

"The point to be noted is that while in the first class the photographer succeeds by mechanical and scientific means, in the two latter he must also have sympathy, imagination, and a knowledge of the principles upon which painters and photographers alike rely to make their pictures. He must understand the laws of composition, those also which affect the distribution of light and shade; his eye must be trained to distinguish "values"; that is to say, the varying effects of light upon objects of different material, and the gradual changes of the color in an object according as it is nearer to or farther from the eye; these involve technical knowledge which may be acquired; in addition, there must be the distinctive sense of what is beautiful in line and form and color which may be developed by study. And lastly, the natural gift of imagination, which conceives a beautiful subject and uses technique and instinct to express it."

These accepted facts Willard fully recognizes, and these qualifications he amply possesses. The mere record of facts has little concerned him, but to make his camera register a fleeting mood of man or nature, express an idea in terms of line and color, make visual a poetic thought—this has been his aim and ambition. And the prints herewith reproduced afford abundant evidence of the success he has attained. Willard early caught the true inspiration of the artistic photographer, set his standard high, and has ever been an enthusiastic worker, and an ardent promoter of everything calculated to give the camera the rank which, in his opinion, it deserves as a picture producer. Said he, in a recent conversation with the writer:

“Pictorial photography as now practiced by serious workers has reached a definite place as an accomplishment. It has attracted strong artistic abilities, and some of the work in the field of photography is admitted by even conservative judges to entitle it to a place among the older and better established arts. Indeed, the world is getting out of the habit of condemning a picture because it is a photograph, and photographs with dignified pictorial qualities are sought,



THE CUP
By S. L. Willard
From a Gum Bichromate Print

as they should be, by people of discriminating tastes. In a word, the public recognizes that the photographer's work may be high art.

"The photograph has reached its present level, however, as any high degree of perfection can only be reached, through the patient and earnest strivings of the worker. All eyes are upon him, and he knows that the goal in the field of photography is not to be reached without patient study, prolonged experiments, and vexatious disappointments. As there are in all lines of endeavor, so there are in photography enthusiastic workers to whom the mechanical media of picture-making are wholly subservient to the aim to secure artistic feeling; and the apparatus of picture-making in photography, which was at one time considered the all-essential thing, is now regarded much as the painter's palette and brush; that is, as mere accessories to the end.

"Another thing should be noticed. The earnest photographer has become a severe critic of his own work, and has in the past few years developed a peculiar competent judgment of the elements that enter into the making of a pleasing picture. He is already making use of a variety of artistic media, and chooses with no uncertain instinct the colors and effects that give him the best results for the subjects he depicts. In fact, the photographer may be and often is an artist in all that the word properly implies, and his art must rise or fall according to his courage and his faithfulness to his aims."

One would naturally expect a worker with the camera who entertained views such as these to be an enthusiast in his art. Willard is an enthusiast in every sense of the term. He is an advocate of photographic salons and at the same time is equally strenuous in his advocacy of purging these exhibitions of everything that savors of mere commercialism, and of the efforts of those amateurs whose work, however promising, does not warrant by its intrinsic merit, a place in such exhibitions. According to his view, admission to a salon should mean a certain honor, and should imply not merely interest in the camera and its possibilities, not merely, if one may so express it, graduation from the kindergarten stages of the art, but actual attainment that places the worker above the common ruck of amateurs and dilettanti.

That his contention is right no one will gainsay. The true artist with the camera should glory more in a dozen or more plates all as nearly as possible masterpieces in conception, composition, and manipulation than in hundreds or thousands of prints, all of which fall below the dead level of mediocrity that seems to be the ultimate goal of so many would-be pictorial photographers. The commonplace, the merely passable prints, should be for the photographer what studies are for painters—products interesting enough perhaps as an evidence of conscientious effort, but prints nevertheless for the worker's portfolio and not for the public, for the studio and not for the

exhibition-hall, a witness of shortcomings and an incentive toward renewed endeavor rather than finished products to be paraded before the public.

In photography as in every other art it is a case of many being called but few chosen, and pictorial photography to-day has no greater enemy than the fledgling artist who is over-ambitious to show his work before that work possesses the qualities that command respect



THE MODEL AT LUNCH
By S. L. Willard

and elicit admiration. Willard has not sinned in this way. He has been content to show only those prints which have satisfied his artistic sense. In everything he has done that has been offered for public attention he has striven for some thought, some sentiment, in short, some idea worthy of being presented in artistic guise. He, of course, has had his failures, like every other earnest worker, but he has also had his "triumphs," and he is ambitious to have his reputation rest upon and be gauged by these triumphs.

There is scarcely a print offered in connection with this article that does not merit this appellation. The ideas expressed are refined and ennobling, and the prints are characterized by those qualities that recommend themselves to the cultured and thoughtful. In "Where

the Trout Do Bite," "Willows," "Gathering Shades," "The Meadow Brook," and many another print of similar character, we have bits of nature transcribed with absolute fidelity to fact, and at the same time with all the poetry and feeling with which an experienced painter



PORTRAIT OF MISS M.

By S. L. Willard

invests his canvas; in "Study Head" and "Portrait of Miss M.," we have examples of frank poetic portraiture; and in "The Cup," "Despair," and plates of similar character, we have a thought or sentiment expressed with all the force and charm with which artists in other media have sought to invest their pictures.

It is to be regretted that Willard's time is so largely monopolized as to preclude a more assiduous devotion to his camera. He is a true artist in every sense of the term, and prints such as are here reproduced are a genuine pleasure. It should be said in this connection, that much of

the subtlety of the photographs accompanying this article is lost in the process of reproduction. But that is unavoidable, since the engraver's camera cannot record the elusive qualities upon which prints of this character depend so much for their beauty. The element of color is almost wholly lost, and the black and white of a printed page offers but a sorry substitute for the harmony of tone which a skillful photographer can produce.*

EDWARD ARTHUR RAY.

*For other examples of Mr. Willard's work, see following pages.



WHERE THE TROUT DO LURK
By S. L. Willard



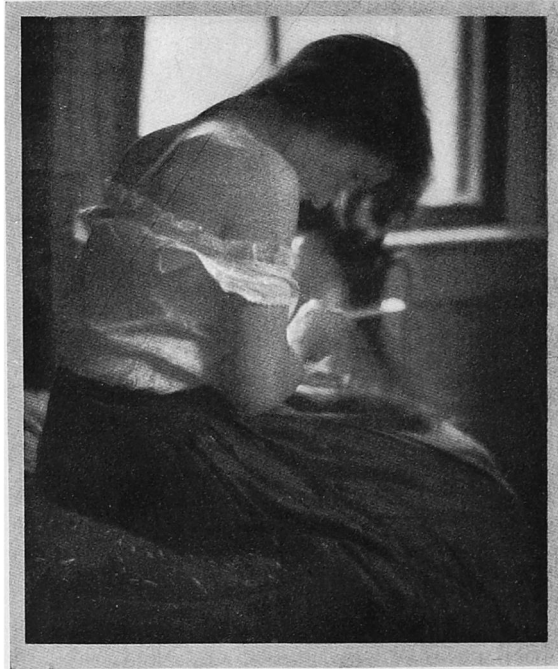
DUTCH ART IN LONDON

The Guildhall exhibitions in London have a distinctive character of their own, and while the displays given usually lack the charm of novelty, they frequently have an interest that far transcends that of the shows of contemporary work commonly given in the other important galleries.

Being loan exhibitions, they have little concern for the year's doings in art, but they are always arranged for a special end, and it should be said that they rarely fail of their purpose. In a word, they are not less an educational opportunity than an artistic treat.

Primarily, the show of this year is one of work by earlier and modern painters of the Dutch school. It is a large subject for comparatively small space, especially as the

largest room in the Guildhall Gallery is given over to an entirely separate collection. The earlier masters have suffered the most. As far as they are concerned, more could easily have been made of the limited opportunity. For when so little could be shown, it seems that this little should have consisted of one or more masterpieces by each

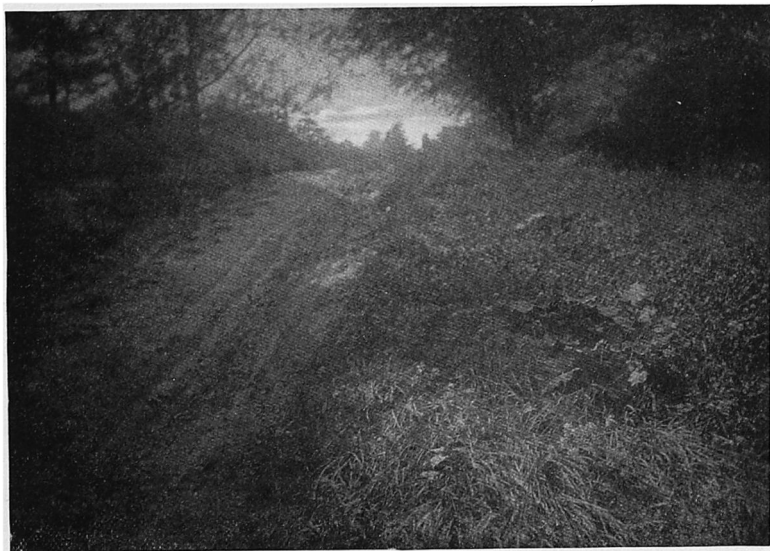


THE MORNING TOILET
By S. L. Willard

of the great masters, instead of a few fine paintings and many inferior works of interest to nobody but to the various dealer in attributions.

There are pictures by Frans Hals and Rembrandt that one need not be a Morellian to refuse to those painters, who surely would turn in their graves could they know that such performances were being foisted upon them. But then there is also one fine portrait by each that the artist and the art-lover would travel many long miles to see.

"Admiral De Ruyter," by Hals, lent by Earl Spencer, is a strong



DEEPENING SHADOWS

By S. L. Willard

study of strong character. It is a three-quarter length, the figure posed with as much feeling for the commanding force of the man as for its place on the canvas, the face broadly modeled, and the costume of black, with full white sleeves and a white collar, put in with the technical freedom that makes Hals seem so very modern—yet what modern could be quite so supremely skilful? You feel the strength of a man born to lead and to conquer in this portrait by the Dutch master, even as you do in the Admiral by Velasquez.

Rembrandt's portrait of his son Titus, as a youth of thirteen, lent by a French collector who calls himself Monsieur X., has been seen in recent years at the Rembrandt shows in Amsterdam and London, and needs no description. But to see it again is to feel again the

beauty of the face and the splendor of the color. This canvas is assuredly a very remarkable performance by an unusually gifted artist.

Perhaps it is because these two pictures give the standard of Dutch art in the past that so much else of the old work strikes one as trivial and insignificant. But there are still a few other fine things, which would merit extended notice did space permit more detailed discussion.

When it comes to the modern painters—and there is no link



THE WILLOWS

By S. L. Willard

between them and the giants of the seventeenth century—the chief merit seems to be in the unusually large and representative series of paintings by Matthys Maris, an artist who now rarely exhibits—who, for that matter, now rarely produces. Many of his most beautiful pictures, done before he became a slave to his ideals, belong to English and Scotch collectors. Never, perhaps, have such a number been hung together. There is, therefore, an admirable chance to study his methods and his achievement. One cannot say that the collection alters the opinion one had already formed; there is still no question that he was most accomplished when he was least vague and elusive. It may be that he is now busy in pursuit of far higher ideals, but if



STUDY HEAD

By S. L. Willard

(See article on Work of S. L. Willard)

